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that the poor little things have never been created for heavy moral artillery. Fond as they are of the pomp and finery of churches, they are the last creatures who listen to sermons. Commercially speaking, the grisettes are little jewels. What would the Boulevards be without the grisettes? What would the stores be without the grisettes? What would France be without grisettes? *Vive la Grisette!* She relieves the monotony of the business atmosphere of the stores. Look at her, as she walks in and out as graceful as Esmeralda, but snappish as Saucyella. Have you ever seen such a creature before, rosy and silly, skillfull and spiteful, malicious as a sprite, playful as a child, airy and wiry, looking one moment as if she would like to kiss you, and in the next as if she would like to bite you! She is a most diabolical little *frondeur* in petticoats. Her eyes have so many expressions that they cease to have any, yet the eyes swim in a perpetual sea of frolic and glee; here and there a flash of lightning for having received an unkind cut from *Poupon*. Again all sunlight and joyous sentiment on exchanging a successful *aillade* with Alphonso, who just entered the *Café Vêry*, smiling upon her as he passed: her nose, originally of average nose-dimension, has become actually *retroussé* by dint of malicious turning up at the encountering of all kinds of women: the mouth cannot be described, as it is never in repose; she talks constantly, and her eloquence may be compared to the odds and ends of the little dolls, and trees, and flowers, and little foolish *picci-picci*, which make the delight of children on Christmas trees. If her little Vesuvius of a throat does not send forth streams of speaking lava in the house of business, her lips at least maintain a convulsive motion, as if to show her spite at being doomed to silence. As she stands almost buried in pyramids of calicoes and satins, like a shy little hare in a gorgeous field of wheat, you hear a noise occasionally; you think it is the rustling of the satin: you are mistaken—she speaks, she chats with somebody, and blended with the grating noises of the rattling piles of silks, you hear a crisp, silvery, bold, determined, almost musical scream. This is the grisette's laugh. She laughs, and we must be off, laughing too, because it is all nonsense to talk of French Business Life in any serious sense.

We almost invariably applaud the difficult, instead of the agreeable, and mistake the vice of the means for the perfection of the end. We prefer the strong impulse of surprise to the delicate touch of delight, and are seldom satisfied unless we are astonished. A rapid succession of demi-semi-quavers poured forth in a fantastic variety of flights and flourishes, to the utter confusion of melody and common sense, we admire as the perfection of music. A mechanical sleight of hand, a fluttering dexterity of pencil, or a laborious minuteness of vulgar imitative detail, we approve as the excellence of Art. We forget that the most obvious are not the most arduous difficulties; that the most exquisite efforts of skill are often concealed in their own ingenuity, and least palpable when most successful.—*M. A. Shee.*

### THE THEME OF WOMAN.\*

"Who is't can read a woman?"—*Shakespeare's Cymbeline.*

THE question of our motto involves another, which is, bookwise, in what edition shall she be read? She is read best in the original—Nature, it may be answered. True; but then there are the translations of the historian, the dramatist, and the lyrical poet, and we wish to decide which of these is best able to do the original justice. Besides, there is the additional zest of an æsthetical enjoyment in viewing a subject in the *camera obscura* of a human mind, when its development there constitutes Art.

Among the poems of Charles Swain, his tender homilies and social kindnesses, his rustic scenes and ocean songs, there are none in which the heart, in its blinded earnestness has been more enlisted than in his lyrical touches upon the character of woman. He is more chaste in thought, though less elegant in expression, and not so daringly insinuating as Moore, and sometimes there is a tinge of the implied satire of like nature with what we find in Sir John Suckling's "Prithee why so pale?" They are always fresh, however, and never can be denominated

"These lousy love-lays, these bewailments;"

a certain laxity in their composition pronounces against any set sentimentality, while they only become stale by their multiplication. We had seen the bard in all his phases, and sufficiently, too, had the present volume been reduced one half. His is not that inexhaustible nature, that every new emanation declares a discovery.

A song proper has wider bounds than a mere ballad, where character is confined to the action of the plot. Song shadows forth something more, and addresses the imagination within due bounds, and gives you a hint of existence, like the dim half of a moon, barely seen in its outline. Thus, take this from Burns—

"An angel form's fa'n to thy share,  
'Twad been o'er meikle to gi'en thee mair—  
I mean an angel mind."

Such is the shadowing forth of what her mind is, wholly beyond mere balladizing. We must not at this time be tempted into an analytical examination of what a song should be—whether the embodiment of some passing sensation, or the life-long burden of a heart. At any rate, we hold it proper that it should be the expression of feeling, as experience gives it, and know no reason why feeling cannot be as well transitory as permanent, so it be true and ungarbled, and by such lines would we confine the domain of Song, although we read in "The Princess"—

\* *Characteristics of Women. Moral, Poetical, and Historical.* By Mrs. Jameson. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 1857. *Poems of Charles Swain.* Boston: Whittemore, Niles, & Hall. 1857. (Both in the choice and pocketable shape of "blue and gold.") The Shaksperian Essays of Coleridge and Hazlitt would make a good companion of the former, could they be put into the like form.) *Sisters of Charity, and The Communion of Labor.* By Mrs. Jameson. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 1857.

"Great is song,

Used to great ends : myself have often tried  
Valkyrian hymns, or into rhyme have dashed

The passion of the prophetess : *for song*  
*Is due to freedom, force and growth*  
*Of spirit, than to junketing and love."*

A preference fitly held in consideration of what follows :

"Know you no song, the true growth of your soil,  
That gives the manners of your country women?  
Cyril, with whom the bell-mouthed flask had wrought,  
Or mastered by the sense of sport, began  
To troll a careless, careless tavern-catch  
Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences,  
Unmeet for ladies."

The bell-mouth should father such imputations, we think, not the Spirit of Song.

Mrs. Jameson's book opens to us another sort of delineation of woman. The perusal of her Essays has led us into various other readings on the inexhaustible Shakspearian theme, and we have finished with an increasing delight in her geniality, which is not unlike this soft spring morning on which we write, while Nature bourgeoises, and the air falls fresh and cool, as if filtered of its grossness in dropping from the clouds. We have lowered the Italian awning to shield our eyes from the glare of the sky, but have its reflection on the fresh, young grass, and in the fountain basin; in like manner has she dropt the veil over the stronger lights of Nature, as revealed in man, and confined our vision to their reflex in the milder phase of woman.

She comes, too, as an umpire between the historian and the dramatist, not as Courtenay has done, with the gauge of the chronicler, trying each of the poet's statements to see if it will pass through—a proceeding well enough as a matter of research, but as that only—but she looks at the question, as one that involves truth of character, and in her own nature, so genially fitted to her theme, she feels the full claim of allowing that "analogical hypothesis," as Bulwer calls it, which is the poet's license when he comes to apply the story of the chroniclers to the purposes of fiction. She cites the case of the Duchesse de Longueville in her two phases, as heroine of the Fronde, and the protectress of the virtuous philosopher Arnauld. She says :

"Now, if Shakspeare had drawn her character, he would have shown us the same individual woman in both situations: for the same being with the same faculties, and passions, and powers, it surely was: whereas, in history, we see in one case a fury of discord, a woman without modesty or pity; and, in the other, an angel of benevolence, and a worshipper of goodness; and nothing to connect the two extremes in our fancy."

Again, speaking generally, she says :

"The riddles which history presents, I find solved in the pages of Shakspeare. There the crooked appear straight; the inaccessible, easy; the incomprehensible, plain. He did not

steal the precious material from the treasury of history to debase its purity—new stamp it arbitrarily with effigies and legends of his own devising, and then attempt to pass it current, like Dryden, Racine, and the rest of those poetical coiners; he only rubbed off the rust, purified and brightened it, so that history herself has been known to receive it back as sterling."

It is Courtenay who has adduced evidence to this point, we believe, in his "Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare."

So she relies rather on the dramatic women of Shakspeare than on the portraits of historians for her examples in elucidating the characteristics of her sex. History is so much taken up in dove-tailing authorities, so trammelled by prejudices, that its results are always, she contends, like a relief in marble, which has only one side presented to view, while the drama gives us the same figures cut into statues, which can be examined at all points, removed from its group, and judged of as an individual, irrespective of its circumstances. She very aptly carries the comparison farther, in likening the conventionalism of life to the drapery of the statue, which is not put on till the figure is complete as a nude, and is still made to show the real flesh and blood beneath; and so, she says, it is with the characters of Shakspeare, and not as with those of history, where the personage and his accidental circumstances are one, and not viewed relatively.

Mrs. Jameson asserts, with some pride, that a female satirist by profession is an anomaly in English literature, and undoubtedly wishes the same could be said of the other sex, whose wits as well as wittings have indulged so much in the castigation of her own. If we were to frequent modish drawing-rooms, however, we might find that intellect, if of no sex, as is affirmed, gives no exclusive benefits on that score, and that the words of the poet—

"Women want the ways

To praise their deeds, but men want deeds,"

is but a pleasing antithesis, and perhaps more attractive for its daring and disregard of truth in both clauses. We'll trust the fair ones both to do and praise, and venture to believe that they can always enlist, as the woman in "The Tatler" affirms, the most sensible men to their support. They have only to look back to the middle ages, as they all will, and instance chivalry, when an age succumbed to them, and find such an amount of flattering unctious as the chemist never discovered in his choicest balms. Frauenlob, the minstrel, is long ago a canonized saint; but the degenerate race of ladies' men of the present day are not worthy of such a precursor. The vindications of women we most rejoice in, like those of Horace Smith and Elia, in his Modern Gallantries, came from no flatterers.

Gondarinoes are plenty no doubt (*vide* the "Woman Hater" by Beaumont and Fletcher), and they are mongers and producers of cartloads of common-place, whether they think that "women were created only for the preservation of little dogs," or like Napoleon, deem them mere egg-

ovens for conscripts. The polished satirist turns a phrase neatly, and the result is—

"Most women have no characters at all."

The epigrammatic talker finds the sentiment ready made, and confirms it (see Coleridge's "Table Talk"), adding that Shakspeare said, it was the perfection of women to be characterless, a belief that the perusal of Mrs. Jameson renders disbelief, unless perchance character, as a word, has no good meaning attached to it, but the one which Tennyson by inference implies, in his contradistinctive epitomizing of man—

"Not like the piebald miscellany, man,  
Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire,  
But whole and one : and take them all-in-all,  
Were we, ourselves, but half so good, as kind,  
As truthful, much that *Ida* claims as right,  
Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly theirs  
As dues of Nature."

So again the man of fashion and conventionality has his opinion, and inculcates its observance as one of the graces upon a bastard son, for we read in "Chesterfield's Letters"—"As for solid, reasoning, good sense, I never, in my life, knew one that had it, or who reasoned and acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together," and thus we have pages of it.

The low vulgar man is still a disciple of cant, and with the dirty-faced man at the Peacock (in "Pickwick") proclaims in his turn that "Rum creeters is woman."

Such things, however universal or unconfined to special ranks, do not put aside the old question, "Who is't can read a woman?"

Nor does the other extreme leave us less in the want—that which makes man a sort of primitive extract from the dirt, which, doubly refined, becomes woman; which has another expression in Burns—

"Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,  
And then she made the lassies;"

and is still further gratified by pet phrases from Otway, like—

"O, woman, woman, Nature made thee  
To temper man; we had been brutes without thee;"

and from Campbell, like—

"Without a smile from partial beauty won,  
Oh, what were man—a world without a sun!"

Coleridge claims that the only just criticism Shakspeare can have must be founded in reverence; we must concede our finite powers in comparison with his infinitude, and bow without a murmur;—an immunity that his preëminence would seem to be entitled to, which, nevertheless, is little short of such worship as we pay the divinity; Garrick was once berated for naming Shakspeare "the god of our idolatry." If skepticism in criticism leads into trivialities, good sense will rectify it; but such blind reverence, preached as applicable to Shakspeare alone, will not

fail to become mere vassalage to an idea, in which Shakspeare, the mortal poet, is lost sight of, just as bigots in religion lose sight of God, and substitute an embodied dogma. In approaching Shakspeare we are willing to believe that we near such a being as the world has never been cognizant of in another child of man, but we must be true to whatsoever talents are given us, and not lay them up in the napkin of credulity, as some moderns, and Germans particularly have seemed to do, when the incarnation, Shakspeare, is presented to them. Precisely because he is not divine, do we deem him amenable to mortal scrutiny. It is a singular clashing of opinions, that in this same Germany, where the supposed attributes of God are canvassed in a very caucous-like spirit, and gauged by human measures, that a mortal should be held above such examination, and receive such immunity as their God does not obtain. This comes of bigotry in criticism; and it is an old maxim that extremes meet.

There is no agreement, as in most things in this world, upon the women of Shakspeare. It may be the stuff—woman—is idealized by him into an inhuman creation, just as painters represent the garments of angels, as mere substances, without texture or fabric, with nothing but the hint derived from human associations; yet with all that, he goes to the genuine English nature about him every day for his first hint, which he knew enough to work out in all accordancies, without ever having been in Verona to form a Juliet, or in Venice for a Desdemona. Emerson says:

"The sentiment of Imogen is copied from English nature; and not less the Portia of Brutus, the Kate Percy and the Desdemona. The romance does not exceed the height of passion in Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson or in Lady Russell."

If he goes beyond this similitude with Nature, he draws the portrait by only refining on the same key. Mrs. Jameson says of Miranda:

"She resembles nothing upon earth, but is yet a consistent, natural human being."

The antithesis is something more than a mere trick of words, for it is fraught with meaning;—though beyond the Probable, it is inherent in the Possible. De Quincey says:

"The possible beauty of the female character had not been seen as in a dream before Shakspeare."

He defines and refines, and turns over the substance of a woman, until the whole composition is oxygenized with the essentials of a living soul. Bulwer ("England and the English") has compared him in this respect with Byron, to show the Shaksperian habit of looking at things:

"When Byron's heroes commit a crime, they march at once to it; we see not the agony settling into resolve; he enters not into that subtle and delicate analysis of human motives, which excites so absorbing a dread, and demands so exquisite a

skill. Had Shakspeare conceived a Gulnare, we should have seen the woman's weakness contesting with the bloody purpose; she would have remembered, though even with loathing, that on the breast she was about to strike, her head had been pillowed; she would have turned aside—shrunk—again raised the dagger; you would have heard the sleeping man breathe—she would have quailed—and quailing—struck!"

It is woman in her peculiar sphere that we desire most an analysis of; for a discrimination of any anomaly is the most unsatisfactory of results.

"We cannot fight for love as men may do,  
We should be wooed, and were not made to woo,"

has a strong figurative application when applied to all that can woo energy in ambition, love of power and revenge. Such things man may woo, but woman should be solicited by them only under great circumstances, that may draw her from her native sphere of obscurity. Her deeds are those of the affections, and her daily life wears away too soberly happy, too monotonously equipped to be the theme of a grosser poetry. Only a master skill can gather out of such a routine, apart from hedging adventures, the staple of fine-drawn characters—and such did Shakspeare do, and as Mrs. Jameson cites, Raphael and Correggio did the same in painting. Most dramatists look at personages as lawyers underscore their briefs for *points*, or as jockeys do at turf-horses; and bestow no pains on the welding into harmony of component parts, making a *point* of the whole, as in the case of a true, unfamed woman. In such they see no character to suit their ends. Looking on such an ideal for woman was Coleridge led into assenting to the satire of Pope, that to be characterless was the perfection of woman, not seeing that he made it also the perfection of character—just as we prize that style, which is so chaste as not to be caricatured, and are deceived as to the magnitude of that edifice, whose proportions make the perfection of harmony.

Most dramatists look upon the women of their plots much in the way that Damis, a young author, in one of Lessing's comedies, looks upon a wife—

"If I can't have a very good wife, I'd rather have a very bad one. An every day woman, neither cold nor warm, nor this nor that, is not fit for a man of letters. If I can't have a wife who will assert a place in a future dissertation, *De bonis eruditum uxoribus*, let me at least have one, who will not escape a writer, *De malis eruditum uxoribus*. Anything but obscurity; anything but mediocrity."

The fact is, the moment a woman emerges from this obscurity and mediocrity—as far as the latter is implied in the former—so soon does she put off womanly virtue in the main, and her situation becomes one for which she is not by Nature intended. Bright exceptions, there doubtless are; but even in such a case as the Maid of Orleans, viewing her in the most commendable supposition of her character, we can but feel, that her destiny, by some slip in Fortune's box, was taken from a man. Yet, at the same time, she is a type of what is great in history in woman-

kind. Her deeds individually were insignificant, not what a man with her inspiration would have made them, but her whole power lay in her capability of incentive. It is almost the same that Shakspeare grants to Lady Macbeth, the difference being that their spheres and aims were unlike; the motive power works the same in both cases. Joan was frail in person, and Mrs. Siddons claimed that the wife of Macbeth should be so also. We associate corresponding physical and mental size, and by this means of contrast the urgency of both was more dramatic and impressive in this defiance of associations. Shakspeare, though he accomplished so much in Lady Macbeth, failed in the *Pucelle*. THE CRAYON (V. III., p. 200) has already entered into a discussion of this matter. Mrs. Jameson is inclined to the opinion that the Joan of Henry VI. is not a creation of Shakspeare. We are, however, assured on our part that it is as much his as any other of the characters of that play, and for the very reason that he has given her a perceptible elevation over the traditional and current estimation in which she was held in Shakspeare's time, and Shakspeare was the man, above all others, to have such a regard for the inherent dignity and truth of woman, as to accomplish this much in the very face of superstition. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jameson is very right in asserting that—

"In representing her according to the vulgar English traditions, as half sorceress, half enthusiast, and in the end corrupted by pleasure and ambition, the truth of history and the truth of Nature, justice and common sense are equally violated."

And we fully agree—

"That this heroine and martyr remains yet to be treated as a dramatic character."

The apology for Shakspeare, if one be needed, must be found in the received truth of history of his day, and in the subordinate part the maid assumes, being merely a means to forward the story. Besides, we do not believe that Shakspeare had any sympathy with the Joan of tradition, which made her the leader as well as incentive of heroic actions. Such was an aspect, so opposite to the natural position of woman, that Shakspeare had no pleasure in dwelling upon it. The ends hardly justified, poetically, the means. It is only Charlotte Corday, the personification of political indignation, that we were pleased with, while we turn away from the woman as an assassin. The Spartan mothers, who urged their sons to return with their shields or upon them; our own mothers of the Revolution, who oiled the flint-lock and melted their spoons into bullets, stood yet behind the veil of womanhood; but the very deeds of Moll Pitcher presuppose the physique of a washerwoman, which deprived her of all poetic justice. Portia, the wife of Brutus, remains the dramatic character she could never have been, if instead of fainting in trepidation while the scene was being enacted in the capital, she had joined the body of the conspirators her-

self, and been one to strike a blow. Mrs. Jameson relates an incident, as found in Plutarch, and which Shakspeare has not availed himself of, and as it shows still further the poetic situation of a woman denying herself for the example of her husband, we may be allowed to give it shape in a copy of verses :

## PORTIA.

"Think you I am no stronger than my sex,  
Being so fathered and so husbanded?"

## I.

Brutus was gentle, but a patriot's pride  
O'ermastered Nature, and a Cato's daughter  
Proved the philosophy her lineage taught her—  
And on the Ides of March great Cæsar died.

## II.

Distraction rent the State and Brutus fled;  
But Portia was too noble to be tearful;  
She nerved her husband by a look so cheerful,  
The exile went, blessing the wife he wed.

## III.

She turned to leave him, but upon the wall  
A parting of Andromache and Hector,  
Forewarned the bodings that the midnight spectre  
Soon moaned to Brutus of Philippi's fall.

## IV.

The pictured grief was too much like her own,  
To strengthen *him* she had suppressed revealing;  
But in the face of Art was no concealing,  
A chord was touched with a responsive tone.

## V.

She threw her in her maiden's arms and wept,  
That stoic wife of Brutus, Cato's daughter,  
Whose proud philosophy had never taught her,  
That Art with Nature oft hath counsel kept.

We have a similar case in point in a late fiction, "Two Years Ago," by Kingsley, where Grace Harvey, searching among the hospitals of Balaklava for Tom Turnhill, sits down one day to read the reflex of her experience in Longfellow's "Evangeline," "which was to her as the finding of an unknown sister."

As a general rule, there is this distinction between the prominence of Shakspeare's men and women; his men make the circumstances of their prominence; his women have their prominence asserted by their circumstances, and in that he is true to the teachings of normal nature. Says Ruskin :

"Shakspeare always leans on the force of fate, as it urges the final evil; and dwells with infinite bitterness on the power of the wicked, and the infinitude of result dependent seemingly on little things."

If we were to modify this, it would be only to show its greater application to his female world. On the slight circumstance of the dropping of a handkerchief does Desdemona's career depend, and her example may be taken as a type of his womanly passiveness. Look at Cleopatra, and we have activity only as shown in whom she works upon—Antony; so it is with Lady Macbeth. Constance

is one at whom action is aimed. Juliet's life is absorbed. The Portia that entraps Shylock is disinterested except for another.

There is a little circumstance in the original Italian story of Othello that Shakspeare departs from, and as it shows how Desdemona was ensnared, not by blind accident, but by her passive over-trust in seeming infantile simplicity, we may venture to run it into the mould of verse, and point its moral, as an instance of the frailest magnet, that can draw a woman to destruction :

## IAGO'S CHILD.

Iago's child—a pretty thing—  
The lady Desdemona kissed,  
And taught it little songs to sing,  
And told it all the tales she wist.

She told of India's jeweled queens,  
Othello's deeds she put in rhyme,  
But spared all woe and rapine scenes—  
'Twere pity it should know of crime.

She took a scarf her lord had brought  
To deck her, when he came from thence,  
And showed it, when its eyes, she thought,  
Grew brighter for their innocence.

Iago's child must be his bone,  
And he ne'er dreamed or wished that aught  
But blasted conscience, like his own,  
Could chiefly rule a human thought.

He knew his ends, and counselled oft  
For duty that which lay in cheat,  
And made its winning ways and soft,  
The cloak of many a foul deceit.

In Desdemona's lap it sat—  
That wife of chastity the soul—  
And beckoning her with this and that,  
Iago's child the 'kerchief stole.

Ye know the story as 'tis told,  
Whereby a tale of death is sung;  
Oh, God! what misery we behold,  
When sin makes compact with the young.

When they that should be made of love,  
And wombed so late beneath a heart,  
That throbbed in constancy above,  
Should thro' their new world with such art!

When we come to view the dramatic character of woman in the light of contrast, it affords many more salient points for delineation, which it does not always require a Shakspeare to seize upon. This contrast we deem of two kinds, or as bearing two relations—as with man, and as with woman's normal state of obscurity.

There are certain scholars of book lore, who are fortunate enough to bring away from the university a natural relish for the Greek classics, that the system of drill, and ungenial prosody has not eradicated while there; and these refer everything that emanates from the Gothic mind to a test of comparison with the ancient; but the most san-

guine of them are ready to admit that the Greeks, lacking the elements of contrast, that now-a-days afford dramatic situations almost ready made, have never succeeded in the development of a single consistent womanly character. In their routine of existence women were excluded from the life of the household and society, habitually, much in the same way as in some abnormal conditions of intercourse with us, the women are forbidden by custom to be the partakers of the after-dinner cheer—a place where their presence is more needed than hardly is elsewhere to be found. Notwithstanding they had their idealists, like Plato, to dignify the position of woman—on paper, as in the Republic—their actual condition was much as is represented by the mouth of Iphigenia, in Goethe's drama, which in this respect is at least Greekish, notwithstanding Mr. Lewes' indignation on that point. We quote William Taylor's version :

"I would not judge the gods—but sure the lot  
Of womankind is worthy to be pitied.  
At home, at war, man lords it as he lists;  
Possession gladdens him; him conquest crowns:  
Even death to him extends a wreath of honor.  
Confined and narrow is the woman's bliss:  
Obedience to a rude, imperious husband  
Her duty and her comfort."

Says Pericles, in Thucydides, "that woman is best of whom the least is said among men, whether of good or evil." Here is the state of obscurity, in which it is so hard to read a woman, and they had no Shakspeare to do it for them. We find in them the antetypes of such sentiments as we have given from Pope and Coleridge.

"Even to *have* a character," says De Quincey, "violated to a Grecian mind, the ideal portraits of feminine excellence, whence, too, partly the too generic, too little individualized, style of Grecian beauty. But prominently to *express* a character was impossible under the common tenor of Grecian life, unless when high tragical catastrophes transcended the decorums of that tenor for a brief interval, and raised the curtain which veiled it."

And then the woman of the Greek tragedy came forth, but not a woman after all, only a man and called a woman, for all distinctive traits of sex were ignored. It was not till acquaintance was had with Northern Europe, that woman in the South benefited by what was the station of woman there, found a near approach to men in a sort of significance; but then it was too late for re-accusatory justice from the Greek tragedians, long ago earthed, and only again to be revived, when Mahomet promulgated equally appreciative doctrines. When free agency is debared, and the widow of a Hindoo throws herself on the pyre, where "smoulders her dead despot," it loses its significance as a deed of constancy, and becomes rather a reproach to lawgivers, that contrive thus to secure an attachment to their memory, that they did not deserve while living. Such was the woman of the south, in the days of Greece—an agent of convention, and as another

right hand to man, to do his will blindly. In the north the woman was set unto the man more

"Like perfect music unto noble words,"

the one the accompaniment of the other. The ancient Germans fought beside their wives. Boadicea led her armies in Britain. Salique laws came from the south alone. These were the archetypes of northern women, who mingled in life with their husbands, and afforded the contrasts, that the Greeks never had the opportunity to behold or to study.

Shakspeare understood this principle of contrast to a charm, and knew its existence between men and women, be they of the north or south. We find offsets everywhere in his plays. He proceeded, as genius always does, without rule, yet always on principle, however unconsciously done. Mrs. Jameson has well remarked he would never have placed Sir Andrew Aguecheek in any nearness to Portia, the woman of intellect, as we have her in her palace or in the court that tries Antonio. It was Massinger, a lesser than Shakspeare, who gave Camiola a character in which he would emulate Shakspeare's Portia, an attendant idiot. Intellect and idiocy cannot counterplot, nor are they a match in life, as innocence and villainy are, the great players in the wicked games of the world. If we look for this contrast in Shakspeare we find it in Iago and Desdemona. For intellect and revenge look at Portia again, with the brooding Shylock beside her. Then ambition, passive or active, as we have it in Macbeth and his queen. Once more note the almost over-weening Hamlet, and the over-trusting Ophelia. We think it is a passage of nice discrimination, in which Mrs. Jameson comments on this contrast of Hamlet and Ophelia. She imagines other of Shakspeare's females in connection with him. "The gentle Desdemona would never have dispatched her household cares in haste to listen to his philosophical speculations, his dark conflicts with his own spirit. Such a woman as Portia would have studied him; Juliet would have pitied him; Rosalind would have turned him over with a smile to melancholy Jacques; Beatrice would have laughed at him outright; Isabel would have reasoned with him; Miranda would have wondered at him; but Ophelia loves him."

It is noteworthy that the only female of Shakspeare's creation, that seems to have any sort of resemblance to those of the Greek mind, is Hermione in "Winter's Tale," and that, as Mrs. Jameson pleasingly shows, formed a typical construction, not in the Greek drama, where power and gentleness—reserve is not gentleness—is almost incompatible, but in Greek Art, where we have almost a different race of beings from their females of the tragedy. In the latter, power is almost always evinced by masculine attributes, and thus woman is

"Impudent and mannish grown."

In Greek sculpture the enlargement of her sphere becomes repose, where dignity is power.

"The same eternal nature—the same sense of immptable

truth and beauty, which revealed this sublime principle of Art to the ancient Greeks, revealed it to the genius of Shakspeare; and the character of Hermione, in which we have the same largeness of conception and delicacy of execution—the same effect of suffering without passion, and grandeur without effort, is an instance, I think, that he felt within himself, and by intuition, what we study all our lives in the remains of ancient Art."

If the *Characteristics of Women* is owed to the imaginative perception of Mrs. Jameson, the two lectures on *Sisters of Charity* and *The Communion of Labor* have emanated from long-<sup>ed</sup>tried feelings, and a mind where years, with their experience, have overruled the workings of the imagination, and have come to look at the great Theme of Woman, with insight more philanthropic than poetic. Such a character as Florence Nightingale has awarded a new significance to womanly nature. It shows that if her normal condition may be that of a wife and a mother, there is yet a contingency for the unwed, whereby humanity may gain, when the affections which are denied bestowal upon offspring, are expended upon the poor and miserable. Recent statistics show, that in our country the number of marriages among natives does not increase in the ratio of the population. Domestic happiness has become pecuniarily dear. As a consequence, there is a great increase of unwed women among us; and to preserve them from degradation, larger spheres of duty must be opened to them than have already been accessible. Labors that have been the duties of men must be shared between the sexes in a communion of labor. These are questions for the economist and humanitarian. They are to bear in mind that the bestowal of affections is a necessity of woman's nature. In this they have the agency to be used. They say, let it be bestowed upon the inmates of the hospitals, prisons, reform schools, almshouses, and what good can it accomplish? These are comparatively new offices for women in the Protestant situations. The healing power that the Romish church has exercised in this way is not seen, for the glaring ostentation of her dogmas. It was a reactionary result that the religious influence which made a saint before the Reformation, was held to be the result of a demoniac power afterwards, when men believed in witches. This was one aspect of the gulf widening between the two religions. Mrs. Jameson says:

"It was characteristic of the two diverging superstitions, that in the former age Dante conceived his Beatrice as the type of loving, wise, and spiritual womanhood, leading her lover into Paradise; while Milton's type of female attraction was Eve, the temptress to sin and death. The time is come, let us hope, when men have found out what we may truly be to them; not worshipping us as saints, or apostrophizing us as angels, or persecuting us as witches, or crushing us as slaves; revering us for that power we are allowed to possess, not jealous of it, nor throwing it into some indirect or unhealthy form; profiting by our tenderness, not oppressing us because of it; taking us to themselves as helpers in all social good, not

leaving our undirected energies to wear away our own lives, and, sometimes, trouble theirs."

If it has required centuries for the Protestant community to see what is the worth of womanly endurance and energy in these directions, and we are but just beginning to act upon our observation, the question of our motto—*Who isn't can read a woman?*—involves in its answer something more than the poet or dramatist can tell us, and we turn to the philanthropist, not, indeed, to be pointed to such schemes as are embraced under the name of Woman's Rights—a phrase that Mrs. Jameson justly despises—but to know where to find the Sisters of Charity, that the world must ever need, and where in our services to do good, we can look for assistance in a community of love and labor. W.

### KNOTTY POINTS IN THE THREAD OF LIFE.

THERE is a constant disposition on the part of men of intellect and enterprise to congregate in large cities. The quietude of rural or village life has no charm for them, nor do the pursuits of either offer those grand though dangerous opportunities of becoming rich and notorious, that are to be found in large cities. Most men love notoriety, all men love wealth and the power it gives. To acquire either in the ordinary course of things is a matter of as much ambition as difficulty. Ambition can haunt and irritate the imagination of the weak and delicate; but difficulties can be alone overcome in the violent chase after worldly goods by the sinewy and muscular, by the bold, and oftentimes unscrupulous. As yet the light of science is not extended enough to enable any one to foresee the results of great commercial undertakings, and the ignorant, consequently are not inferior to the intelligent in conjecture or action. In fact, unthinking action is more required than thinking forbearance; and success is not proportioned to the amount of thought preceding it, but to the amount of thoughtless effort out of which it grows. Prudence is a virtue, but seldom an ingredient of worldly success. It may keep a man from heart-burning declensions on the scale of life, but will never carry him very near its apex. The acquisition of fortune is at best a lottery. Ticket high and you may gain enormously in the face of ninety-nine chances in a hundred of losing all. But losses are relative. All individual losses flow back into the general reservoir of the public, and apart from the temporary shifting from one to the other, the whole wealth of the community soon assumes its general tone and circulation. Chemistry shows that the vulgar notion of destruction is but figurative, but a decomposition of one form of matter, preliminary to the formation of another. Men wait over the loss of that which they never possessed except in their imagination, or by some barbarous combinations of figures to suit their diseased brains. Where the laws of things are not known, there is room for, and temptations to, gamble; and what is the whole business of the community